

THIRTY-FIVE YEARS FROM THE FIRST, SO-TO-SAY “SHIP CONFERENCE” AND THE FOUNDATION OF JOURNAL “ESTONIAN DISCUSSIONS ON ECONOMIC POLICY”

Many important events and dates can be celebrated in Estonia in 2019. We can mention a few of them here:

- **Republic of Estonia – 15 years as a NATO Member State (since 29 March 2004)**
- **Republic of Estonia – 15 years as an EU Member State (since 1 May 2004)**
- **100 years from the victory of Estonia over the German Landeswehr in the Battle of Võnnu on 23 June 1919. 23 June is the Victory Day – Estonian national holiday**
- **100 years of the Estonian-language University of Tartu as the Estonian national university (1 December 1919)**
- **320 years from the relocation of the University of Tartu to Pärnu (1699–1710), Academia Gustavo-Carolina was opened in Pärnu on 28 August 1699**

There will be also some important dates related to our conference on economic policy in 2019, namely it will be **35 years from the first** (24-26 May 1984) and **25 years from the second** (27-28 May 1994) conference. The second conference was like recognition of the first conference as many earlier participants had insisted that the undersigned should organise the next conference! It was no doubt pleasant recognition and the conference was certainly held and has been held annually by now! Starting from the fourth conference (28-29.06.1996) it was already an international conference with many participants and has remained an international conference!

2019 is also the **35th anniversary** of founding our journal *Estonian Discussions on Economic Policy* as the materials/theses of the first conference (including some papers) which was held in 1984 were printed as a publication/collection (with the title *Problems of Intensification of Public Production in the Estonian S.S.R.*, Tallinn: 1984, 232 pp.). That publication/collection and the subsequent ones can be regarded as preliminary publications for the current journal, and the current journal can be regarded as the successor of these earlier collections.

2019 – is also the **35th anniversary** of our first three-day “**ship conference**” on M/S Vanemuine which travelled then on the Emajõgi River to Lake Peipus, Lake Lämmijärv and Lake Pihkva and to Värskä on the coast of the Värskä Bay. On the second day of the conference work the ship travelled in the Värskä Bay and Lake Pihkva and to Pskov in Russia on the coasts of the Velikaja River (where a local tour guide gave us an interesting tour of the city and took us to lunch with delicious Russian dishes) and then travelled back to Värskä with participants listening to presentations and having discussions.

The initial plenary meeting was held in the History Museum of the University on Toome Hill in Tartu, and after lunch the conference work continued on the ship in three sections

(the main conference work took place during travelling on the ship on the routes: Tartu–Värskä; Värskä–Pskov–Värskä).

The conference work ended in a final plenary meeting in Värskä on the third day and the participants travelled back to Tartu on ship in warm and sunny weather, having pleasant discussions. We had certainly a lot of substantial conversations and discussions on important issues, enjoyed the beautiful nature of the coasts of the bays, lakes and the Emajõgi River, and tasted beer and snacks!

In 1984 and 1994–2006 the conference started in Tartu and then continued in Värskä (14 such conferences in total), in 2007–2012 the conference was held only in Värskä and since 2013 the conference has been held in Jänedä (in 2019 already the 7th conference in Jänedä Manor). The collections, which were preliminary publications for the current journal, were published until 2006 and then, since 2007, the journal has been published under the current name (in three languages). Also the XV conference – the jubilee conference – was held in that year!

At conferences both in Värskä and in Jänedä, “round tables” have been held with the participation of practical experts on the subjects of the administrative and state reform and local governments. These discussions have mostly been very informative. As the administrative reform was partly carried out in 2017, it would be a good idea to continue such round tables soon in order to discuss – the results, what activities were successful and what not particularly!

At the jubilee conference (XXV, in 2017) we started also a new event during the spare time after conference hours – namely blitz chess (remembering also the Estonian Grand Old Man, chess genius and – “always the second” international grandmaster (1937) in the world chess history who gave so much to the world and to Estonia, and author of chess books, Paul Keres!). There were enough participants among both Estonians and Germans. We hope it will become a fine tradition in the future.

Looking back at it now we can say that **since 2007** (when the XV conference was held in Värskä and when our publication/journal started to appear under the current title/name), **both the conference and the publication have as if found new strength which is mainly expressed in the following:**

- we increased requirements for papers (both in terms of the content and form, the quality of papers improved);
- the peer review of the papers received acquired a broader scale (i.e. more peer reviewers also from foreign universities were involved in addition to Estonian peer reviewers);
- in order to achieve improved and more focused activities, the conference was held at only one place – in Värskä, i.e. we transferred the plenary meeting from Tartu to Värskä;
- we included the “round table” in the conference programme in some years with important contributions also from the practical experts of economic activities;

- in order to promote the distribution of the journal and the papers published in the journal, we contacted additional international databases (until then we had only been in the ECONIS database in Kiel, Federal Republic of Germany, but in 2009 we were included also in the EBSCO database; then several other databases followed; by now we have started the process of getting included in the Scopus database);
- the proportion of international participants increased (Jäneda is closer to Tallinn for them, only 67 km; it is more than 300 km to Värskä), mainly thanks to the airport and new tram lines; several colleagues from foreign countries have rented a car from the airport every year; they can also arrive by train from Tallinn);
- both the cultural and the nature programme have become more varied due to broader choices.

There have been participants and papers published from many countries (18 countries by now), from universities and other organisations of these countries at the conference during the past years. In the years when the conference has been held in Jäneda (since 2013), additional new participants have come from **Czechia** (2013), **Russia** (2014), **Lithuania** (2015) and **Georgia** (2016). In 2019 we will hopefully be joined also by participants from **Ukraine**. This is a great news and the organisers believe that this list may grow even more.

Also problems of economic policy of many (by now 22) countries have been studied and discussed in our journal.¹ The journal of last year, 2018, was published at the beginning of November and two issues were published together between the same covers (total volume 182 pp., in addition a CD with 313 pp.; with coloured photos and figures).

Doctoral students from universities of Austria, Georgia, Federal Republic of Germany, Russia, Ukraine and other countries and their recognised supervisors, professors (some of them even members of the Academy of Sciences of the country and government officials and bank board members!) have appreciated highly publishing papers in our journal and giving presentations at our conferences and regarded it appropriate. Many doctoral students from foreign countries have published papers in our journal (often together with their supervisor) and delivered excellent presentations and participated in discussions successfully at conferences both in Värskä and in Jäneda.

And finally – besides everything else I wish success and a long life to both the conference and to the journal! The work done so far has often been complicated but the existence of the good team and efficient cooperation have helped us to overcome almost all obstacles in a quite positive and effective way and to achieve success.

The past 35 years of organising the conferences and publishing the journal (initially the collection) have offered a lot of opportunities for self-development and been

¹ The list of the countries is available on the last pages of this journal in the section: Information from the editorial team / Information des Redaktionsteams.

overall fruitful and interesting! We will strive to continue these activities with the contributions from all earlier and future participants!

For now, we have planned our activities until 2022 – when the 390th anniversary of foundation of the oldest Estonian university, the University of Tartu, will be celebrated!

But life and the events will go on!

Many thanks to everybody with whom we have had contacts, including the numerous sponsors! We believe that this pleasant cooperation will continue!

October 2018 – May 2019

At Pirita-Kose in Tallinn

Best regards on behalf of the organisers of the conference and
the editorial team of the journal,

Matti Raudjärv

(initiator-main organiser of the series of conferences and
the founder-chief editor of the journal)